



SERGEANT SYDNEY WALTER BAKER

SERVICE NO. 9093

HELLES MEMORIAL

DIED 7th JANUARY 1916, AGED 26

Sydney Baker, the youngest son of Richard, a farm labourer, and Mary Ann Baker, was born in North Warnborough in 1890¹. The family lived in Up Street, North Warnborough and Richard and Mary were reported as being in Butler's Cottage in 1915 and 1916². In 1911 Sydney was a shepherd³, but his obituary reports that he had also 'served about six years in the Army'. No trace of this service has been found to date. An obituary in the Hants and Berks Gazette of 10 July 1915 records the death of Pte. S.W. Baker 'from a bullet wound in the head received at the Dardanelles'. However, this proved to be false, perhaps an understandable, if regrettable, error in the casualty reporting system given the confusion of war, for he was actually killed in action on 7 January 1916. His obituary in the 12 February 1916 edition of the Gazette records that he 'took part in the heavy fighting in the earlier operations at the Dardanelles, receiving a bullet wound in the head, but after being invalided home he rejoined his regiment after a short while, and now, like many of his old comrades, has fallen on the field of honour'. It is possible, therefore, that Sydney was wounded on 28 June 1915 in the same action as Frank Butler (see above).

Sydney was awarded the 1914 Star, the British War Medal 1914-20 and the Victory Medal 1914-19 in April 1915. At about the same time he was also granted a First Good Conduct Badge⁴. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial and, like the others, on the Odiham War Memorial.

Although, through no fault of the troops on the ground, the Gallipoli Campaign failed to achieve strategic success, the 2nd Battalion The Hampshire Regiment were highly successful and gallantly played a significant role in the evacuations, being the very last to leave the front line. A tactical withdrawal from contact with the enemy is a precarious operation of war at the best of times. To achieve it in such circumstances demonstrates organisation, planning, deception and execution of a high order. The Hampshire Regiment had much of which to be proud.

I would like to thank Lt. Col. Colin Bulleid and Rachel Holmes of the Royal Hampshire Museum, Winchester, for all the help they have given me in researching the experiences of the 2nd Hampshire Regiment in the Gallipoli Campaign.

¹ Obituary in the Hants & Berks Gazette, 10 July 1915 and 12 February 1916

² The Hants & Berks Gazette, 12 February 1916

³ 1911 Census, Odiham, Hampshire ref: RG14PN6245 RG78PN296 RD109 SD1 ED12 SN129

⁴ The Hampshire Regimental Journal, June 1914, p.146